

# U.S. PRESS COMMENT ON WILSON'S INQUIRY

Tone of Newspapers Generally Favorable to Stand Taken by President Regarding German Peace Proposal—Some Dissenting Opinions

Comment of American newspapers as expressed in this morning's editorials on the President's response to the German Chancellor's proffer of peace in general accepts it as a test of German sincerity.

Many say it is not at all that was hoped for, but conclude the President has shifted the issue back to Germany as a "counter-offensive."

Following are excerpts:

## Philadelphia Public Ledger

To deny that the American people will be deeply disappointed at the President's first step in response to the note of the new Imperial German Chancellor would be to deny a fundamental principle. The country may be disappointed, but it is firm as adamant against any peace at this time with "the insoluble thing." It was ready for a more reasoned reply than the President returned so promptly and properly to the Imperial German approach. But it was not ready for what it has been and is being—what it is most difficult to distinguish from the offering of "conversations" with the Kaiser's Chancellor.

The President's comment that the Central Powers must withdraw their forces from invaded territory before they can suggest an armistice to the Allies cannot escape being read with real disgust by the entire Allied world. It is not to be denied that the President has merely shot this as an idle arrow into the air or incorporated in an important document a casual remark to postpone answering an awkward question. He must mean something by it. Does he by any chance mean that he will suggest an armistice to the Allies if the Central Powers do withdraw behind their own frontiers? And if he does mean it, what is to prevent Germany and her allies from destroying at a single blow all the efforts of our glorious and costly victories this summer by simply taking their huge armies and enormous armaments home?

Suppose the German Chancellor meets this remark by offering to evacuate all Allied territory at once. Will President Wilson order his soldiers to attack the enemy while they are carrying out this proposal of his? Can he, in fact, avoid entering into a practical armistice while this idea of his own is being put into effect? This would mean that the enemy powers would successfully and unexpectedly rescue their armies from the fatal grip of Foch, Haig, Petain and Diaz and battle them up behind their own boundaries, on much shorter lines than they now hold, to fight that "defensive war" which the Chancellor openly talks about. But the President, like the peace terms we finally offer.

## Philadelphia Inquirer

If the nation expects that the President would return as the answer to Germany's peace proposals two words—Unconditional Surrender—it will be disappointed. Unconditional Surrender is the ultimatum (in the opinion of the President) has not yet come. But if Germany submits to the requirements of the President before he will advise our allies to halt the armies in their smashing blows—the requirements that all invaded territory shall be evacuated—Germany will have virtually surrendered. Just the same.

## Philadelphia Press

This reply to the repudiation of the peace overtures made by the German invaders which the country looked on and hoped for. It is in the nature of a parry. It is not likely, however, to be at all unanswerable to Germany. The elimination of the Kaiser from the peace negotiations which the President insists upon as a condition precedent to any peace treaty will be a bitter pill for the Imperial Government of Germany.

## Philadelphia Record

The President's inquiry of Chancellor Maximilian for the authority behind him is not a reply to the peace overtures of Germany, Austria and Turkey. It is only preliminary to that reply. But it affords a sufficient forecast of it. "No armistice will be granted while German troops are in foreign countries. If the German people want peace, let them take their Government out of the hands of the Kaiser and open communications with the Allies in their own name."

## New York Times

The Imperial German Chancellor and all Germans above and below him should understand that in laying down terms and principles President Wilson is not speaking merely his own thought, but is proclaiming the "common purpose of enlightened mankind." He is speaking "in terms of broad-voiced justice and mercy and peace and the satisfaction of those deep-seated longings of oppressed and distracted men and women and enslaved peoples that seem to them the only things worth getting a war for that engulfs the world." The principles which are the foundations of our Government, the foundations of the liberal Governments of those with whom we have joined forces to destroy the dangerous military power and the insufferable pretensions of Germany, are the very essence of Mr. Wilson's program of the world's peace, "the only possible program." The American people believe these principles are worth fighting for. The peoples of the Allied Powers hold that belief. They will continue to fight for them until Germany has had enough of fighting and accepts their terms.

Before the request of the Chancellor can have formal consideration and reply the President must be informed that the German Government accepts the terms laid down in his addresses and that the object of the discussions proposed "should be only to agree upon practical details of their application." It is open to Germany to say that this is a demand for surrender. That is what it amounts to, and the President speaks what is in the minds of the American people when he makes the surrender of Germany a necessary preliminary to any talk about peace.

The terms declared in the various addresses of the President are "the only possible program" of the world's peace. The German Government knows what they are, understands what they mean.

## New York Tribune

A great majority of Americans, and especially nearly 2,000,000 who are "over there," will wish, as we wish, that it had been not an inquiry but a reply, and a reply in four words—"We demand unconditional surrender."

Our conclusion is that President Wilson's "inquiry" was intended by him not to express the state of mind in this country toward a foolish peace, but to make it impossible for the Imperial Government to commit itself in terms of making any peace to the German people. "We have said, in vain, the peace on President Wilson's own conditions."

## New York World

In dealing with the German peace proposal, President Wilson has used the same tactics that Foch used in dealing with the German offer of

pull trees and without deportation of the inhabitants. Then, and not till then, we may talk peace. Now the light goes on.

## Omaha World-Herald

The President did not make the mistake of returning a categorical and unqualified "no" to the note from the German Government. If there was a sting for him he did not fall into it.

## Cincinnati Enquirer

President Wilson's message requiring action before words on the part of Germany—not a "strategic retreat" dictated by military necessity, but immediate and voluntary evacuation of every inch of foreign soil—strikes a death-blow at all possible chance of considering future peace proposals offered for the purpose of delaying final victory. The President's message is the plain answer of a plain man, in spite of the carefully couched language required in foreign relations. The reply, with its refusal to talk peace so much as to hesitate in hostilities, must strike a responsive cord in every loyal heart, and again re-emphasize the sentiment to America and all her Allies.

## Boise Idaho Statesman

The question as to whether the Chancellor represents the German Government which has conducted the war seems to be the most important part of the President's note, in view of the fact that he has repeatedly stated that "we cannot come to terms with them. They have made it impossible."

## Rocky Mountain News

President Wilson's answer is but the beginning of a series of diplomatic correspondence between Washington and Berlin regarding the construction of phrases that may give the enemy time to mend the break along the front. The German Government is trying to save for itself something from the wreck of defeat.

## Salt Lake City Tribune

Germany can obtain peace by accepting the terms laid down by President Wilson in his address of last January and subsequent addresses, and by withdrawing her forces from occupied territory. But it must be the people of Germany, and not the Kaiser and his military advisers, who accept the terms and make the necessary promises.

## Salt Lake City Herald

We cannot help but regret that the President's note to Germany was not more decisive. It should have any disposition to argue a matter that in the interests of the civilized world admits of no argument.

## Baltimore Sun

President Wilson's answer to the German Chancellor is perhaps the mildest mannered document that ever expressed an implacable determination. The general feeling, if the news and other considerations on the matter is to be taken as an indication, was that the right answer would be simply a hot demand for unconditional surrender. But now that the issue has been decided every one, we believe, will recognize it as the logical, straightforward thing to do. What this country, what the Allied world wants to know is whether the German offer is a piece of trickery or a genuine proffer of peace on such terms as the Allies will grant. If the Chancellor answers these questions unambiguously we shall know. If he answers them equivocally, if he avoids or evades or attempts to confuse them, then we shall also know.

## Nashville Tennessean

With the keen glittering sword of justice and right, the President has foiled the would-be cunning maneuver of the Hun and has shivered the latter's blade to the very handle.

## Montgomery Advertiser

The American people would not have had the President say less than he has said. They rejoice that he has so promptly and skillfully avoided an enemy snare and that he voices their feelings when he declares that burden, now as ever, is on German shoulders.

## Atlanta Constitution

The President's reply to Germany is conclusive and to the point. If Germany really desires peace, they have an opportunity to get it.

## New Orleans Times-Picayune

Yesterday's message from President Wilson to the Imperial German Government will prove in the judgment of this newspaper a disappointment to the American people. Their first unfavorable impression will be modified when the natives and allies inspiring his step are made clear, but we fear that the note as it stands will impress millions of readers on both sides of the ocean as a modification, even in some sense a retreat, from the fine and straightforward position which he took in his address of September 28.

## Boys at Front Pleased With President's Note

With the American Forces in France, Oct. 9.—President Wilson's note to the German peace proposal relieved the rear lines of the American army this morning. It had been eagerly awaited, its possible character having been widely discussed. The general tone of the note and the comment was a quiet satisfaction that no armistice would be granted while the enemy troops were on Allied soil.

## Boston Herald

For them (the war lords) or whoever they may be whom the Chancellor represents, the President has a straight answer on the question of armistice. There is the open road to a peace which might open the way to peace. Evacuate the invaded territories and evacuate them without destruction or pillage, without malicious cutting of

## Indianapolis Star

It goes without saying that the reply is not what we have all expected and hoped for. Most of us would wish to see the sincerity of the German people indicated and our minimum demands set out in named simplicity and severity. It is the part of wisdom, however, to say that the President is right, knowing more than we can know.

## Chicago Tribune

The President has prevented Maximilian from turning to the German people and saying: "You see, we offered peace, but you refused it. I have revealed the real purpose of the Allies. You see now it is to destroy the German people. Therefore, fight on." The President has given the German people stern warning of the terms upon which they must seek peace.

## Des Moines Register

The answer is did the German Chancellor really mean it? If he did not mean it, he was bidding merely for better sympathy in the face of what he shaped to picture as unconditional allied aggression, then the President has admirably foiled him. If the Chancellor was in earnest and speaks with authority, no door is closed to him.

## St. Louis Republic

President Wilson's reply to the German peace note, though couched in the language of a polite inquiry, is nothing less than a demand on the Hun for unconditional surrender. And there is no doubt that Berlin and the rest of the world will read it that way. Surrender without conditions. Those are the terms of America and her allies.

## St. Paul Pioneer-Press

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## Prominent Men Here Laud Note

Continued from Page One

practical route to obtain that information. BISHOP JOSEPH P. BEERY, Methodist Episcopal Church — President Wilson is a statesman and I am not. He has an opportunity for knowing inside facts that other citizens cannot get. I confess that President Wilson's note to Germany was a disappointment to me. I do not understand why he did not give a specific statement which would mean substantially unconditional surrender, but I am willing to put my judgment aside and trust that he has pursued the wiser course.

JOHN WANAMAKER — The President's meaningful reply is carefully worded and drawn up to draw attention to some of the weak points of the proposal of the German Chancellor and showing readiness to receive such information as will enable him to give further consideration to the document submitted when its full meaning is made plain.

ALBA E. JOHNSON — I am delighted at the stand the President has taken. WILLIAM PATTERSON, Federal Fuel administrator for Pennsylvania and former Minister to Italy — I had hoped for something along the terms reply to Austria-Hungary, but the American people can safely rely on their great President in touch with our Allies to do exactly the just thing in this most important event in the world's history. Certainly, by his last note, the President has made it impossible for the Kaiser ever to say that the Allies are fighting a war of conquest or the Kaiser is fighting a war of defense for the German fatherland.

FOHMEIER, J. H. MAYER, S. L. Z. FIDELITY — That is the only reply to give. I would not have written a different had I written it myself. They are for an armistice to repair the damage they have received, and to make ready for another drive. They cannot be granted anything but a full and unconditional surrender is the only terms that could be granted to them.

CONGRESSMAN GEORGE S. GRAHAM — Think the condition which the President imposes in refusing to discuss an armistice until German troops have been withdrawn from all invaded territory is a condition which is most likely to be made is that it might go farther as to border disputes. I feel sure that it will meet with the approval of the American people. As to the pertinent inquiry of what the German Chancellor, as to whether he speaks for the German people or the Imperial Government, which is conducting this war, this is most timely and thoroughly in keeping with the former position of the President.

CONGRESSMAN GEORGE W. EDWARDS — Rip the whole Kaiser crew out. That's my opinion of what the American people want now and for that reason I was disappointed on first reading the note. An analysis shows that it can't be construed as leading to a final answer, however, and I think the President is leading them on to see how far they'll go. Personally, I would like to see the Kaiser and all the huns set to wheeling stone in devastated France and Belgium.

HAMPTON L. CARSON — What else could they expect? The indecency of their move and the transparency of its purpose are so clear that there can be no doubt in the minds of any one that this was the true method of dealing with them.

THE REV. WILLIAM H. ROBERTS, Stated Clerk of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of the United States — The note is intended to prevent the Imperial German drive from Germany. It is a warning to the German people to desist from their resistance to the Allies. I regard the note as sagacious and as showing the President's wisdom. He does not say that he accepts the German proposal, but he does insist that Germany make itself more clearly and definitely. He insists upon the withdrawal of German troops from invaded territory. He does not agree to an armistice until German troops are peace demands.

# DON'T TELEPHONE

The gravity of the situation has compelled this letter from the Director of the Department of Public Health and Charities. Read it carefully!

## DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH AND CHARITIES

Mr. L. H. Kinnard,  
Vice President and General Manager.  
The Bell Telephone Co. of Penna.,  
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Yours very truly,

WILMER KRUSEN,

Director.

Oct. 7, 1918.

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